



Above—The Center, Col., school, dedicated in the spring of 1920. Pupils are transported by automobile to this school from a territory 153 miles square. Below—Jesup school, near Waterloo, Iowa.

One of the finest consolidated schools in the United States.

The high school at Cable, Ohio [consolidated]. Ohio had its first consolidated school in 1892.

## Better Schools for Rural America

By R. P. CRAWFORD



Above—Fairview school in Buena Vista County, Iowa. It cost but \$25,000 and is a modern building. Below—The consolidated school at Alta, Buena Vista County, Iowa.

THE biggest revolution in educational progress in America the last ten years has been the least heralded. Today, for the first time in history, we seem fairly on the road to solve the problem of the rural school. Everyone is familiar with the little red or white schoolhouse, but few know that today approximately 50,000 of these little one-room country schools have been replaced with fine up-standing structures—schools that in every way compare with our big city institutions. It may seem hard for those unfamiliar with this new development in country life to believe that many of these schools are far better than those in neighboring cities, but that is nevertheless the fact. This new kind of school has transportation systems in connection, automobiles or horse-drawn busses being used to carry the pupils to and from their homes. It takes hardly longer now for the child to attend one of these modern schools than it did a few years ago to attend the one-room school.

Indiana has more than 1,000 of this new kind of schools and has abandoned approximately 4,000 of its little one-room schools. Ohio has more than 900 consolidated schools. Iowa has more than 400 consolidations. Minnesota, which many people are inclined to believe to be largely a mountainous state, has more than 300 such schools. Colorado, a mountainous state, has over 100. Even North Dakota, with its heavy snows, has more than 500 schools, each serving more than eighteen contiguous sections and with two or more teachers. Approximately 96 per cent of the public school pupils in Massachusetts are attending schools of two or more rooms. There are now approximately 12,000 of this new kind of rural schools in the United States.

One will hardly believe, perhaps, that in Colorado there is one school close to the mountains, which serves a territory 100 miles square and where very few of the more than 300 pupils leave home before eight o'clock in the morning, and almost all are home before five in the evening. There are scores and scores of fine consolidated school buildings in Minnesota, schools that are modern in every way even to vacuum cleaning plants and washed air for the schoolrooms, and in many places the schoolhouse is the only building in the village with running water. There are many counties in Indiana, Ohio and Iowa where there is hardly a single one-room school left.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature is that this great development has come in only the last few years. It took seventeen years for Iowa to secure its first consolidated school, but it took only six years to secure the next 300. For the year following July 1, 1919, a new consolidated school was voted for every school day in Iowa. On that date there were only approximately 230 consolidations, but today there are over 400 which have been voted and in most cases have their buildings ready. More than 50,000 children are being transported to school every day in the state of Iowa. Over 2,800 one-room schools have been closed.

Since this development has been rather new in Iowa, most of the school buildings are unusually fine and compare favorably with almost any of those in the cities. Take the building at Jesup, about twenty miles east of Waterloo, Iowa. The total cost of building, grounds and equipment was in the neighborhood of \$110,000. It is a fine type of school which must serve both a village and open country and is typical of the new kind of school. There are about 400 pupils, half coming from the country and half from the town. There are forty-eight square miles in the district and thirteen busses are used for transportation.

To give one some idea of the elaborate character of these new village schools, a brief description of the Jesup building may be of interest. The building itself is 159 feet long and 98 feet deep. It has three floors, the lowest floor being nearly level with the ground. The first floor takes care of the first and second grades, the manual training room—which is equipped with some power machinery—the gymnasium, shower baths

and locker room, and a lunch room off the gymnasium. On the next, or main floor, are rooms for the seventh and eighth grades, a room for agriculture, a sewing room, and four additional grade rooms. On the third floor there is a model housekeeping suite, consisting of a kitchen, dining room and bedroom, the latter to be fitted out for the course in home nursing. There is also a tile bathroom off the bedroom. This is in every way as well equipped as a small home would be. The dining room has a handsome fireplace. The kitchen is equipped with a large gas range and a built-in refrigerator. There are science laboratories on this floor, as well as four recitation rooms.

An auditorium opens into the corridors and as many as 650 people have been accommodated at one time.

The stage is equipped with scenery and footlights. Telephones connect every room in the building. There is a large vacuum cleaning plant in the basement, and clocks in every room, operated by one master clock. There is even a covered driveway at one side of the building so that the children can be unloaded from the busses in stormy weather without getting wet. Eight and one-half acres comprise the school grounds, which are laid out like a park. Is this not a contrast to the eleven one-room schools that preceded it?

Take the consolidated school at Boxholm. It was erected four years ago at a cost of approximately \$80,000. There is everything that one could think of in this school even to marble shower baths such as one would find only in a big city hotel, and yet it is practically a country school, since of its 300 pupils more than three-fourths come from the country. Or take the consolidated school at Alta, Iowa. The one-room schools have been eliminated in 74 per cent of Buena Vista County, where this school is located. Every day over 200 pupils are transported from the surrounding country to the Alta school. The building which was erected in 1916 represented then a cost of \$110,000 with \$25,000 spent for equipment.

There is perhaps no state in the Union that has learned to spend as liberally for rural schools as has the state of Minnesota. On one occasion I traveled nearly to the Canadian line and at nearly every station there was a schoolhouse that would compare favorably with those in any ordinary city. There are even consolidated schools miles from any railroad. One such consolidated school was formed by abandoning five log schoolhouses near the shores of Red Lake and fifteen miles from the nearest town. Three years of high school work are offered here almost in the wilds of upper Minnesota. Much of Minnesota's progress in securing its more than 300 consolidated schools has been due to its splendid system of supplying state aid and the state supervision of schools. There is hardly a consolidated school in that state which would not receive \$2,500 a year state aid, and many of these schools receive more than \$4,000.

The Bloomington school, located about eight miles from Minneapolis, is one of the finest school plants in this country. It is really in the open country, although there are a few houses and stores near-by. They do not, however, constitute even a post office. This school is located on an 18-acre tract of land, with a magnificent view of farming country and woodland in every direction. The total cost of the structure, completed about two years ago, was \$100,000, including equipment. There is a

washed-air ventilating and heating system and a vacuum cleaning plant. Gas for operating the stoves in the domestic science department is purchased in tanks and kept outside the building.

At each end of the building are small one-story sections. One of these constitutes an auditorium and gymnasium, while in the other part are the various laboratories. The auditorium and gymnasium has an outside entrance, so that farmers' meetings may be held with no interruption to the school work. There is a splendid stage, with dressing rooms and shower baths beneath the stage. The manual training shops and science laboratories are located in the one-story wing at the other end of the building. Like many other consolidated schools in Minnesota, the Bloomington school has a conservatory opening out of one end of the building, with glass on three sides. Here agricultural experiments may be carried on during the coldest winter weather. Remember that this is a country school.

Whenever one thinks of the state of Colorado, he must recall that here are some of the finest consolidated schools in the United States. There are 115 such schools in this state notwithstanding the mountainous country and absence of farming in many sections. Eastern Colorado has a number of consolidated schools, many of them very fine, but we shall confine ourselves to one of the newest schools in the San Luis Valley, where consolidation has secured such a remarkable start.

The Center school district embraces 153 square miles. The school building is said to be the largest consolidated school building in the United States. At least it must be in length, for it is 308 feet from end to end and 87 feet wide. It contains thirty-five rooms, not to mention small rooms used for cloakrooms and storage of supplies.

Center is just a little town of about 800 population. Thirteen acres of land at the edge of the town were purchased for the school grounds; shrubs and trees were planted in front, and the rear of the grounds was left to be used for an athletic field and playground. An auditorium equal to that in almost any city school building has been included in this structure. It has a seating capacity of 700, and is completely equipped with permanent theater seats both on the main floor and in the balcony. There is a real stage fitted out with scenery and curtains. On the first floor is the gymnasium with shower baths and dressing rooms. Every mechanical convenience is provided in this building, including electric lights, heating and ventilating system, and telephones in each room. There are about 400 pupils enrolled, half of whom come from the country.

One thousand consolidated schools in Indiana make this state the leader of consolidation in the entire country. Not only that, but from 1890 to 1920, Indiana abandoned 3,990 one-room schools, or 45 per cent of the total number in the state in 1890. In 1902 there were only 181 wagons hauling children to consolidated schools, but by 1918, this number had jumped to over 4,000 (including automobiles which play a big part in the success of consolidated schools today), transporting 57,000 children daily to 897 consolidated schools. Indiana has had a good start over Iowa and Minnesota and now has probably one-twelfth of all the consolidated schools in the entire country.

An interesting provision of the law in Indiana is that any one-room school with less than twelve pupils must be abandoned, and it is optional where there are less than fifteen. The compulsory abandonment does not take place where there are peculiar topographic conditions which make it

difficult to transport the children to another school. What the communities mentioned in this article have done, others can do. To get this new kind of schools in your own state inquire of your state superintendent of public instruction or of the United States Bureau of Education at Washington.



Auditorium in the consolidated school at Center, Colorado.



Several thousand schools of this type stand with barred windows in Indiana.